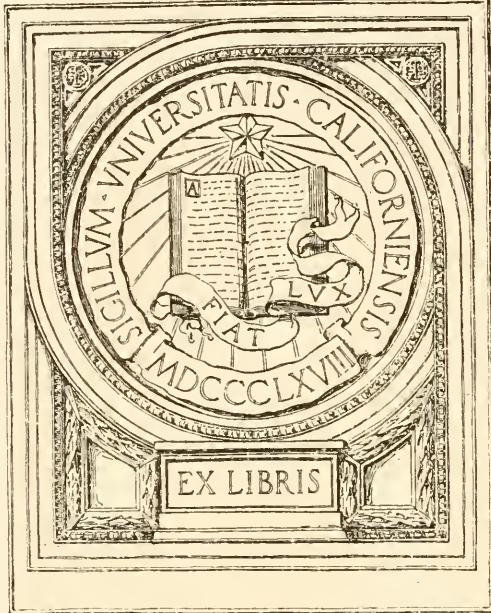


EXCHANGE



EX LIBRIS

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

LD62A-30m-7,73
(R227610)9412-A-32

REC'D IN FEB 17 74-12 PM

LIBRARY USE
FEB 17 1974 1 9

LIBRARY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED
MAIN LIBRARY
CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
THIS BOOK IS DUE BEFORE CLOSING TIME
ON LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW

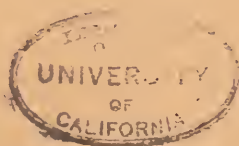
23
V. C. H. 100

The Quarterly Publication of
the Historical and Philosoph-
ical Society of Ohio

C I N C I N N A T I O H I O



Vol. V, 1910, No. 1
JANUARY-MARCH



Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio

Burnet Woods, - Cincinnati, Ohio

OFFICERS

JOSEPH WILBY, - - - - -	PRESIDENT.
FRANK J. JONES, - - - - -	VICE-PRESIDENT.
HOWARD C. HOLLISTER, - - - - -	VICE-PRESIDENT.
CHARLES T. GREVE, - - - - -	CORRESPONDING SECRETARY.
JOHN FLACK WINSLOW, - - - - -	RECORDING SECRETARY.
ALBERT H. CHATFIELD, - - - - -	TREASURER.
MISS L. BELLE HAMLIN, - - - - -	LIBRARIAN.
NATHANIEL HENCHMAN DAVIS, -	} CURATORS.
DAVIS L. JAMES, - - - - -	
MERRICK WHITCOMB, - - - - -	
FREDERICK W. HINKLE, - - - - -	
ELLIOTT H. PENDLETON, - - - - -	

COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF PUBLICATION

CHARLES T. GREVE. MERRICK WHITCOMB.

Quarterly Publication of the His-
torical and Philosophical
Society of Ohio

Vol. V, No. 1
JANUARY-MARCH

Byron Short

Brief Accounts of
Journeys in the Western Country, 1809-1812.

CINCINNATI, OHIO

CONTENTS.

- I. Tour of Mobile, Pensacola, &c., by Peyton Short of Kentucky, in 1809. Account enclosed in letter to Hon. Henry Clay.
- II. Tour to Fort St. Stephens, Fort Stoddert, and Pensacola, by Peyton Short, described in letter to Dr. Frederick Ridgely, 1809.
- III. Journey to Lexington, Ky., by James McBride of Hamilton, Ohio, related in letter to Margaret Poe, 1810.
- IV. Voyage down the Mississippi river to New Orleans, during the period of the New Madrid earthquake, by James McBride, described in letter to Mary McRoberts, 1812.

PEYTON SHORT.

Major Peyton Short, the writer of the following descriptions of journeys through a portion of the Mississippi territory, made by him in 1809, was the second son of William Short and Lady Elizabeth Skipwith, born December 17, 1761, in Spring Garden, Surry County, Virginia. His elder brother, William, born in 1757, was the early American Diplomat of that name.

In 1787, when about 27 years of age, Peyton Short married Maria, daughter of Judge John Cleves Symmes, and three years later moved with his family into Kentucky, where he was elected soon after to the first State Senate, 1792-96. Influenced by the mania for land speculation which was prevalent at that time throughout the United States, he became the owner of thousands of acres of "pioneer lands" in Kentucky and Ohio. Among other tracts, he purchased from Judge Symmes a section in Cincinnati, which received the name of "Short Square"; a portion of this was subsequently owned by his brother William.

His wife died in 1801, leaving three children: Charles Wilkins Short became a physician, and married Mary Churchill; John Cleves Short, a lawyer and jurist of Cincinnati, who married Betsey Basset Harrison, daughter of William Henry Harrison and his wife Anna Symmes; and a daughter Anna. About 1803 Peyton Short married second Mrs. Jane Churchill, widow of Armistead Churchill, and sister of Col. James Henry of New Jersey. By this wife (who died in 1808-09) there were three daughters: Jane, Elizabeth, and Sarah.

During these years in Kentucky, he sustained very large financial losses owing principally to his extensive speculations in land, and when he went into the Mississippi territory in 1809, it was with the hope of retrieving his fortune. Consequently his own interest led him to observe keenly all that was presented to his view, and to make his notes clear and explicit for his own use in the future. He returned to Kentucky after several years and died in Christian County September 1, 1825.

The paper bearing title "Tour to Mobile, Pensacola, &c." contains a vivid description of that southern section regarding the climate, soil, scenery, condition of the inhabitants, commercial possibilities, etc., and it was forwarded to the Hon. Henry Clay, for his use, during the time the question of the occupancy of West Florida by the United States was under consideration in both Houses of Congress, and, when Mr. Clay made an extended speech in favor of such occupation. (Annals of Congress, 11th Cong. 3d Sess. p. 55.)

This manuscript was presented to the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, by Mr. Charles W. Short, son of Judge John Cleves Short and grandson of Major Peyton Short. The Society is further indebted to him for permitting the publication, in this Quarterly, of the additional account of Pensacola, &c., contained in the letter addressed to Dr. Ridgeley, and for the privilege of examining various family letters and papers.

L. BELLE HAMLIN.

I.

TOUR TO MOBILE, PENSACOLA, &c.

Sunday, Nov.^r 12th 1809. Left Melton's about 12 O'clock in Company with Capt.¹ John Johnson, who with three other men are about to take seven pack-horse loads of powder to the settlements on the Mobile, and proceed from thence westwardly, on a trace nearly parallel to the Tennessee river, and not more, upon a medium, than two miles distant therefrom, to a water course a short distance from a small Indian hamlet. We here encamped, and having no other shelter than such as we could make by stretching our blankets over a half-faced tent, suffered much from a succession of heavy rains that fell during the night. Melton is an old Indian trader, living with his family (who are of the Cherokee nation) and several other families of the same tribe, on the south side of the Tennessee river, at the head of the Muscle Shoals. There are few situations more beautiful than this. His buildings are erected on a high bluff, which gives you a commanding view of the river, at this place three miles wide. Below you have a view of a series of small islands beginning about a mile from Melton's and continuing as far as the eye can extend below. Above, at the distance of about three or four miles the eye is delighted with the prospect of a large and fertile island containing about 6000 acres of land, all of which is of the richest quality, and at present covered with lofty timber and the most luxuriant cane. The cane here grows fully twenty feet high, and nearly from one to two inches in diameter. The horizon to the North is terminated by a prospect of those distant mountains which separate the waters of the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. The Country back forms almost a perfect plane, and the lands of a very fertile quality, being covered with hickory, oak, poplar, black walnut, &c.

13th.—Having spent some time this morning in drying our clothes, blankets, &c., we proceeded on our journey through a chain of Indian settlements for about six miles and continuing our course for about fourteen miles further, encamped in a bot-

¹Heitman, in Hist. Register of the U. S. Army, mentions John Johnson, of Pennsylvania, as Captain of 5th Infantry in 1809, and Major of 21st Infantry in 1813. Died Dec. 11, 1813.

tom of wet swampy ground, where for the want of any kind of running stream, we were obliged to make use of the water which fell during the rains of the preceding night. The country through which we this day travelled is generally of pretty good quality, excepting the Indian settlements, where the lands appear much exhausted by a long succession of injudicious tillage; their principal crop being Indian corn, and the indolence of those people inducing them to prefer the cultivation of their old lands to the labour of clearing the new.

14th.—We pursued our journey early in the morning, & having travelled about twenty miles through much the same kind of country as that which I have just described, encamped on a pleasant spot of ground, well watered and with a tolerable supply of cane for our horses.

15th.—Capt. Johnson & myself, having this morning preceded the party, reached Levi Colbert's² on the Natchez road, after riding about five or six miles from our last night's encampment. Having breakfasted at this place we proceeded on our journey & crossing Bear-Creek, ascended the high lands, which separate the waters of the Tennessee from those of the Mobile, & encamped on a mountain. In the course of this day's journey we passed through a considerable settlement of Chickasaw Indians,—the lands in general of good quality—growth principally of hickory and oak, until you reach Bear-Creek, after passing which you soon begin to ascend the high lands above mentioned, which are poor and principally covered with pine:—Levi Colbert is the son of a Scotchman of the same name, his mother a Chickasaw Indian. He is about 50 years of age & is very comfortably situated at a place called the Buzzard's roost, on a small water course which empties into Bear-Creek. He has at this place a large well cultivated farm, about 30 or 40 likely slaves and a white overseer to superintend them—a good stock of cattle and hogs. He keeps a Public house in a large frame building & affords very tolerable accommodations; & as many travellers on their road to and from N. Orleans, Natchez, &c. call on him, he through that medium obtains an ample market for his superfluous produce. Colbert is one of the chiefs of the Chickasaw nation, and a very respectable intelligent man;—he

²Levi Colbert, the celebrated Chickasaw Chief mentioned in Pickett's Hist. of Alabama, Vol. II, p. 187.

appears to contemplate with much satisfaction the amelioration of the condition of his countrymen. In a conversation with me on the subject of the superior advantages of the agricultural to the hunter state he made a very impressive illustration of his ideas on that subject. "Formerly" (said he), "when impelled by hunger, I was obliged to set out with my gun on my shoulder in quest of the uncertain product of the chase—I returned sometimes loaded with a superabundance of wild meats, the greater part of which would become putrid before it could be consumed; and at another time I would be compelled to fast whole days for the want of necessary sustenance. Such is the uncertain life of the hunter. But now when I want a bear I order my people to kill a hog. If I desire a buffaloe, a fat bullock immediately presents itself to my view, and the fertile soil yields an abundant return to the labour of the industrious husbandman."

16th.—This morning five of our horses having strayed from our camp, a considerable part of the day was lost in searching for them. They were at length found about five miles back at the house of an Indian, who returning with the men, sent in pursuit of the horses, demanded a dollar for stopping each of them. After passing 10 or 12 miles on the Natchez road over several bold streams, being the North Eastern sources of the Tombeckbee [Tombigbee], we reached an Indian habitation, where we were kindly received, & supplied on reasonable terms, with provender for our horses and some provisions for ourselves.

17th.—Having travelled 5 or 6 miles this morning over a rugged, mountainous & in some places a very swampy road, we reached the house of a half Indian by the name of James Browne, who keeps a tavern on the Natchez road about 42 miles S. W. of Colbert's ferry on Tennessee river. At this place the trace, which leads to the American settlements on the Tombeckbee, to Pensacola &c., turns off to the left from the Natchez road. This is the first time that we have varied our course since we left the Muscle Shoals, having generally travelled hitherto in a westwardly direction. On this trace we pursued our journey about 12 miles further and encamped on a considerable creek, a branch of the Tombeckbee.

18th.—Having made this day a journey of about 20 miles, we reached McGilveray's³ [McGillivray], a Chickasaw hamlet of

³Descendants of the Scotchman, Lachlan McGillivray.

about 10 or 12 families. The men were all out upon a hunting party; but we got of McGilveray's wife and daughters corn, bacon, chickens, &c. on reasonable terms. The highlands from Browne's to this place may be called pretty good cotton lands. The bottoms [are] not of the most fertile quality, & rather too wet, the growth of the former hickory, oak, dogwood, &c.—of the latter principally white oak, some sugar maple & sassafras.

19th, 20th & 21st.—Having travelled sixty miles over a country for the most part very fertile, we reached Pitchelin's, & having purchased some corn for our horses & provisions for ourselves, we pursued our course about 5 miles & encamped on the 21st on the margin of a very abundant cane brake. Pitchelin lives within a quarter of a mile of the main Tombeckbee river, & on the edge of an extensive & fertile prairie.—He is a very intelligent and respectable white man with an Indian family. He is in very good circumstances, possessing many slaves, horses, and cattle. He informed me that his father was a Scotchman & an Indian trader, that he took him into the Chickasaw nation when he was very young, about the commencement of the American war, and his father dying in that country he was brought up almost entirely by the Indians. He speaks very good English, is a man of excellent understanding & in manners & appearance may be said to be a gentleman. He has always had the confidence of every Indian Agent that has ever been employed in that country by the American government, & is a great favorite & a man of influence throughout the Choctaw nation, & no man stands in higher credit at Pensacola & Mobile. He has a son whom he has educated in some public seminary in East Tennessee, who is employed with a very liberal salary, as an Interpreter in the U. States factory at St. Stephens. From McGilveray's to Pitchelin's, the lands are generally extremely fertile, and abounding in the most extensive and beautiful prairies.

22d, 23d, 24th.—After a journey of fifty five miles over a handsome prairie country interspersed with groves of timber, & intersected with bottoms covered with cane, we reached Starnes'. This country is for the most part badly watered, as far as a traveller can judge from appearances on the road. Starnes is a white man, a native of New England, & has also an Indian wife with three or four children. He is a blacksmith by profession & tells me that he worked sometime in the city of New York, where he

enlisted as a soldier & joined Wayne's army at Cincinnati. Having afterwards descended the Mississippi his term of service expired while he was stationed at Fort Adams; and that he was there employed by the Indian agent for the Choctaw nation to prosecute his trade in that country. I found him also a very intelligent, communicative & obliging man. I forgot to mention in the proper place that we crossed Tibia Creek, which is the northern boundary between the Choctaws and Chickasaws, about a mile before we reached Pitchelin's. We breakfasted at Starnes' & pursuing our journey about 10 miles further, again encamped on the edge of a very fine Cane-brake. Having also purchased of some of the Indians, whose habitations we passed, a sufficient supply of corn, venison & sweet-potatoes, both our horses and ourselves fared very well.

25th, 26th, 27th.—On these days we travelled over a delightfully watered country, but its face generally mountainous and the soil poor. We passed through several Choctaw hamlets. The natives miserably poor. By them we were supplied with corn, ground peas, some venison & other meats. On one of the mountains about 20 miles S. W. of Starnes', we discovered a large quantity of Iron ore, which appeared to be of excellent quality; and streams conveniently situated as well for forges as furnaces. On the 27th aforesaid we reached the house of Charles Duzant, a Creole of West Florida by birth & of French parentage. He is an Indian trader and married to a good looking woman of the *half-breed* as they call them, her father a Spaniard & her mother a genuine Choctaw. Duzant is an honest, industrious, money-making man. He keeps a very good house of accommodation for the country he lives in. Although we got to this place to breakfast we concluded to spend the day here. I mean Johnson & myself. We therefore sent the pack-horse men forward.

28th.—Left Duzant this morning and overtook the pack-horse drivers in the evening at their encampment about 30 miles in advance. The land through which we passed this day grew much better and is extremely well watered.

29th.—This day left Capt. Johnson and his party, & in company with a Mr. Moore a post rider, who had overtaken us at Duzant's, proceeded 45 miles to Shaw's, the first white settlement between the state of Tennessee and the Tombeckbee.

There is a considerable variety of soil between our last encampment and this place.

December 2nd.—Having remained at Shaw's two days, the first from choice, & the second from necessity arising from the badness of the weather, I left that place in the morning & reached Fort St. Stephens in the evening of the same day, about 25 miles. There is a considerable quantity of good land in the neighborhood of Shaw's, principally of the prairie character; as also in detached parcels on the road between Shaw's and St. Stephens, and the interjacent country [is] pretty well settled, considering its infancy. The boundary line, between the lands purchased by the U. States and those still held by the Choctaw Indians, crosses the road about 40 miles north of St. Stephens. I might add, in addition to what I have said with regard to the character of the land through which I have passed, that the Tombeckbee, throughout its whole course, waters an extensive body of the most fertile low-grounds, covered with cane of the largest growth, & abounding in red oak, white oak, sassafras of immense growth & various other kinds of valuable timber, amongst which I must not omit the black or flowering locust. The same may be said of the Alabama & many of the important branches, which empty into that as well as the Tombeckbee river. In the neighborhood of St. Stephens there lies an extensive body of fertile lands, on the east side of the Tombeckbee, on a creek called Bassets Creek. St. Stephens lies on a high elevated bluff on the Tombeckbee, a little below the 32nd degree of North Latitude, & as it is at the head of the tide water of that river, & not only has the character, but the appearance of a healthful situation, it must necessarily become a place of considerable consequence. At present it contains but a few houses & a small population, but that population of a respectable character.

Dec. 4th.—Left St. Stephens; and after travelling about 30 miles over a poor, piny and but thinly inhabited country, reached McIntosh's⁴ bluff, at the house of a Mr. Johnson,⁵ an old Settler of this country, & a wealthy planter, by whom I was very

⁴McIntosh Bluff is situated upon the western bank of Tombigby, between its confluence with the Alabama and the town of St. Stephens.

⁵The first American Court in Alabama was held at McIntosh Bluff, 1803, and *John Johnson*, with two others, presided. Cf. Pickett's *Hist. of Alabama*, Vol. II, p. 198.

hospitably received. On my road to this place I dined at the country town of Washington, a poor miserable place, filled with the lowest kind of Southern horse racers and sharpers.

Dec. 5th.—Proceeded 10 miles further to Ft. Stoddert,⁶ which lies on the Mobile river about four miles below the junction of the Tombeckbee and Alabama rivers, & seven above the line of the Spanish territory. Remaining eight or ten days at Judge Toulmin's⁷ in the neighborhood of Ft. Stoddert and on the

15th.—Set out in company with the Judge on a visit to Pensacola. We dined at the house of a Mrs. Hollinger, a wealthy and hospitable widow, and crossing the Tombeckbee and Alabama in the evening of the same day reached the house of the Messrs. Pierces⁸ living on the eastern bank of the last mentioned river. Between the Tombeckbee and Alabama rivers the land is extremely fertile, being entirely bottom land & the upper end of Nannahabba island, which at this place is eight miles wide. On the road we passed through two extensive cotton plantations. The Messrs. Peirces emigrated about 20 years ago from one of the New England States and have acquired a handsome fortune by commerce.

17th.—Left the Messrs. Peirces, and after travelling about 100 miles in a South eastern direction across the river Perdido & several handsome rivulets, and having passed several *Cow-herd* establishments, we reached Pensacola about 12 o'Clock on the twentieth December. This road throughout its whole extent runs through an extremely sterile country covered with one general

⁶Fort Stoddert was situated upon a bluff below the confluence of the Tombigby and Alabama Rivers, on the *site of the present Mt. Vernon, Ala.* Cf. Pickett's Hist. of Ala., Vol. II, p. 179.

⁷Hon. Harry Toulmin, born in Taunton, Eng., 1766, was pastor of a Unitarian church in 1788. He came to Virginia and the next year became President of the Transylvania University of Lexington, Ky. He was Secretary of the State of Kentucky for eight years; studied law, and compiled a code of laws for the State. In 1804 was appointed Judge of the Superior Court for the benefit of the settlements along Tombigby river, at which time he removed to a cantonment near Fort Stoddert. Cf. Pickett's Hist. of Ala., Vol. II, pp. 204-5.

⁸William and his brother John Pierce, from New England about 1800, established a cotton gin at the Boat Yard upon Lake Tensaw. The latter started the first American school in Alabama at the Boat Yard. Cf. Pickett's Hist. of Ala., Vol. II, pp. 189-190.

forest of Pine. The town of Pensacola lies on a bay of the same name, about seven miles from the gulph of Mexico, & contains something more than 300 houses & a population of between 2 & 3000 souls. It appears to be growing very fast, but I can see no permanent source of improvement. The seat of government for West Florida having been sometime fixed at this place, and a military establishment of about one thousand troops, added to the consideration of the beauty and healthfulness of its situation have hitherto conspired to invigorate its growth; but take away the two first named causes of its improvement, and the latter I apprehend will not be sufficient to support it. The country around is but thinly inhabited. The market therefore is principally supplied from N. Orleans and the American settlements on the Tombeckbee. They sometimes receive a partial supply of flour from La Vera Cruz. Their chickens and wild meats are supplied by the Indians; and the butchers procure their beef from the different *Cow-pens* throughout the country. I found beef the only cheap article in this place. Every thing sold uncommonly high. Chickens at one dollar each. Bacon from 25 to 50 cents per lb. Flour 20\$ per barrel. Sweet potatoes 2\$ per bushel. Pumpkins from 37 1-2 to 50 cents each. Turnips 6 1-4 cents each. Milk one dollar per quart. Eggs one dollar per dozen, and every other article in proportion. I here speak of the retail prices at which the inhabitants, who are the Consumers, purchase them. The traders, who at N. Orleans or elsewhere purchase these articles, of course must make a handsome profit; they sell out by wholesale to hucksters, who retail at the enormous advance I have just mentioned.—The lands lying in the neighborhood of Pensacola are miserably poor, excepting the bottoms of the river Escambia which puts into the bay of Pensacola a few miles above the town which are said to be both fertile and extensive. We remained at Pensacola two days and returned to Fort Stoddert on the 24th.

31st.—On the Evening of this day left Ft. Stoddert in company with one of the officers of that garrison, & set out in a Perogue on a visit to the town of Mobile, which we reached on the day following. On our way we passed a continued chain of large and fertile islands, some of them containing upwards of ten thousand acres of land, overgrown with cane of monstrous

size & all those various kinds of timber, which are indicative of a fertile soil. It is supposed that between the confluence of the Tombeckbee & Alabama rivers & the town of Mobile, there is not less than one million of acres of this kind of land. The high lands from St. Stephens to the Gulph of Mexico are extremely sterile in every direction; but covered with lofty pines, which must necessarily at no distant day be a source of immense profit to this Country. I had nearly forgotten to mention that the bottom & island lands, lying between Fort Stoddert and Mobile and in many places covered with large bodies of live-oak, said to be the most valuable species of timber for ship-building. The town of Mobile stands in a most beautiful situation on the bay of Mobile—It contains about 150 houses, & a population of between 7 & 800 souls, & a garrison of between 3 & 400 troops. This place or some other town on the bay of Mobile must at some future day, for many very good reasons, become one of the largest & wealthiest seaports in North America.

From what has already been observed in regard to the topographical character of the country embraced within the limits of the above journal, the objects which would present themselves to the view of such persons as might wish to migrate to that quarter, might readily be inferred.—The rich lands within the American line are well adapted to the culture of cotton, rice, indigo, Indian corn, tobacco; and I have no doubt but flax and hemp might be cultivated to an advantage, at least in the upper part of that country. From partial trials which have been made on a small scale in the neighborhood of St. Stephens in the cultivation of wheat, the result has been favourable. From the Florida line to the entrance of the bay of Mobile into the gulph of Mexico the lands are nearly of the same description as from thence to St. Stephens; the highlands extremely poor, but the bottoms in general rich and extensive. Below this line it is presumed that the sugar cane might be cultivated to considerable advantage. Most of the highlands being intersected with streams well calculated for mills, the pine-timber growing on them, might be made a source of great profit by the erection of saw-mills; for the product of which there would be a growing demand not only in the country already mentioned, but likewise at New Orleans, the Havanna, as well as West India islands generally. Within these limits also tar, pitch & turpentine might

be made to an indefinite amount & would become a source of great commercial profit not only to the manufacturer, but the country likewise. And these pine lands afford an inexhaustible forage for cattle, which are raised in innumerable herds, without any other attention but that of cutting & marking the calves once a year. Many persons, particularly in West Florida raise from 2 to 10,000 head without the necessity of providing any winter provender for them. And these herds of cattle might, with good husbandry, be made useful in the improvement of the barren lands, which in general afford a good foundation for manure. Here also, at a period not very remote, the business of ship-building will be in all probability carried on to great advantage; as not only the live-oak but every other species of timber necessary for that purpose, abounds in this country, & in addition to the tar, pitch, & turpentine, there is no doubt, as I have already said but that hemp would grow in great perfection, at least in the upper parts of the country. Iron, in the first commencement of the business could either be brought from the Atlantic States, or the Western country by the way of N. Orleans, or from Eastern Tennessee by the way of the Hiwassee & Alabama rivers. The latter would in all probability be the cheapest channel. But in the interior of the Mississippi Territory as I have already mentioned there are large and very flattering appearances of Iron ore, which no doubt could be worked to advantage. I might also add to the list of resources, which this country possesses, the article of Pork, which in the upper parts of the territory might be raised to any amount, from the inexhaustible quantity of mast, which is afforded by the extensive forests of oak and hickory, with which that part of the country abounds—The whole of this country is no doubt well adapted to the culture of the different kinds of fruit to which the climate may be congenial. The apple tree would flourish in the northern parts of that country, the peach throughout the whole extent; & from the great variety of the most excellently flavoured grapes which grow spontaneously in every quarter, reason and observation in regard to the other climates of the world would point out this as one of the promising sections of the American continent for the culture of the vine. Below the 31st degree of North latitude figs and oranges grow in great perfection; and it is presumed that the olive would grow as well below that line

as in any of the regions of the western hemisphere in which that valuable tree is said to flourish.

Dr Sir,

Since putting into your hands my reflections on the subject of the Mobile navigation &c, I have thought that it might be in my power to afford you some information in regard to the country through which that navigation would pass; and with that view have sent you the above extract from my Journal of the town, wch I made in the years 1809, & 1810. Should the remarks, which I have made on that subject afford you any additional intelligence beyond what you already possess, I shall be happy in having communicated it to you; if not, I pray you to excuse the trouble, which I shall have given you in the perusal of the foregoing sheets.

In the course of my observations on the resources of that country I forgot to mention two important articles in the commercial World—I mean Staves & Heading (and many others no doubt, have been pretermitted, which might have been mentioned) with which that country could supply the World; as the white Oak, of immense Bulk, forms one of the principal growths on the bottoms of the Tombeckbee & Alabama Rivers, as well as the wet low-grounds of other streams emptying into those Rivers, and I may also add, of all the most fertile high lands.

It will afford me great pleasure to hear from you whenever you make it convenient to write to me—I probably may descend the Mississippi this winter—If I should, Mr. Wilkins will know where to forward any communications with which you may be so good as to favor me.

I am Dr Sir, Your friend &c,

PEYTON SHORT.

Lexington—Octr. 21st, 1811.

The Honble. Henry Clay,⁹ Esquire

Member of the House of Representatives of the U. States,
City of Washington.

⁹See p. 4 of this publication.

II.

TOUR TO FORT ST. STEPHENS, FORT STODDERT, AND PENSACOLA.

Fort Stoddert—22nd Decr. 1809.

Dear Sir,

About the first of this month I wrote both to you & Mr. Wilkins¹⁰ from Fort St. Stephens requesting the favor of you to address an answer not only to that letter but also to all my preceding letters to me at this place.

A few days after my last letter, I arrived at this place where I unexpectedly met with two old acquaintances, Judge Toulmin,¹¹ & a Mr. Wilson Carman (nephew to Katherine Wilson's¹² father.) These gentlemen as well as the officers of Fort Stoddert have been extremely hospitable & polite to me ever since my arrival in this quarter, and I cannot omit expressing my very great obligation to Colo. Sparks¹³ the Commanding Officer at this place. He has indeed been as kind to me as a brother. He speaks with great friendship & regard of Mr. Wilkins, says that he has a son at school in Lexington under his patronage. I was extremely sorry it was not in my power to give the Colo. any certain account of his son, although I had a faint recollection of either seeing him at Mr. Wilkins', or hearing him or my sister speak of him.

On the day before yesterday I returned from a tour to Pensacola about 100 miles distant from this place in Company with Judge Toulmin. This is a place more calculated for the healthfulness of its situation than any other spot in America. It was there observed that whilst Great-Britain held her Colonies on the Continent of America that there were fewer cases of sickness

¹⁰Charles Wilkins of Lexington, married a sister of Peyton Short. Family papers.

¹¹See note 6 of the *Quarterly*.

¹²Katherine (Henry) Wilson, a sister of the second wife of Peyton Short. Fam. papers.

¹³Richard Sparks of Pennsylvania, was Captain, 1791; Major, 1806; Lieut. Col., 1812; and honorably discharged from U. S. Army June 15, 1815, and died same year. Cf. Expedition of Zebulon M. Pike, ed. by E. Coues, p. 412.

or Death reported from the Garrison at that place in proportion to its numbers than from any other military establishment, which they held in the new-world. Perhaps there could be no better Criterion, by which to form a judgment on this subject. The Scite of the town of Pensacola is supposed to be one of the handsomest in the World. I for my part never beheld so delightful a Water prospect as the Bay on which it lies & the distant view of the Ocean, which presents itself to the eye by faint sketches through a long & narrow Island, which lies at the entrance into the Bay about nine miles from the Town. The back-ground as to its manner of lying is correspondently beautiful, being in the first place an extensive plain about half a mile in width, & bounded in its whole extent by an elevated ground about 100 feet above the level of the plain. This high ground is indented here & there with projecting promontories on one of which are the remains of two antient fortifications which have no small effect, in adding to the magnificence of the scene. But there is one thing yet wanting to complete its beauties, particularly in the eye of a man so long accustomed to behold the fertile Soil of the Western Country. It cannot boast an inch of soil capable of producing an herb or plant for the support of man or beast. One continued bed of sand composes the Scite of the Town as well as the back-ground as far as the eye can extend, covered here & there with a starved Shrub, save only a narrow swamp of about one hundred yards in width running back of the Town—not a foot however of which has ever been reclaimed by the lazy Spaniard, and it was observed to me by Mr. Forbes, a principal Merchant in that place that there never would have been a road made across that swamp, had it not been done in the time the British held the Floridas by that more industrious Class of People. Nothing could have painted their Indolence in more striking Colors, as all that was wanting to effect this object was the Carting as much sand over the ground as would make a firm and solid road, which an American Farmer would have been able to do in the course of a Week. This swamp merely from the name might be supposed to be the Mother of fevers, but there is not one cause existing within its bosom to produce this effect, it being formed by a number of excellent Springs, which keep the whole surface constantly covered with the purest Water, from which the sun

in his fullest rays can never draw a single particle of putrid matter.

Judge Toulmin & myself counted the number of houses in this place, & found it to contain about 300. The town is now growing very fast & from what we could learn as well as the observations we were able to make, there have been more houses built therein within the course of 3 or 4 years back than perhaps for a half Century before. This is the first place I ever saw, where Money is of less value than any other Species of Property. There is nothing wch at this place will not command a ten-fold higher price than I ever heard of before; a Midling-sized pumpkin there readily commands three bits or 37 1-2 Cents, a turnip half a bit or 6 1-4 Cents of a size not larger than an apple. Sweet Potatoes \$2.50 per bushel; Indian Corn 4 dollars per Spanish Barrel of 3 bushels; indifferent flour from 25 to 30\$ per barrel, and every other Article of provision in the same proportion.....

The population of this place consists entirely of pensioners on the King of Spain, a small military establishment of about 600 men, & subjects, who are dependent on the other two descriptions of men, such as Shop-Keepers, Keepers of what in the Spanish tongue they call Fondas & Casasettas, the former corresponding to the Hucksters of Sau'ges (?) Onions Potatoes Turnips &c., & the latter to the Keepers of Grog Shops—both of which are common in most of the Towns of the U. States. Not a decent Tavern or boarding house is to be found in the whole place, and indeed we should have been put to our shifts for any kind of accommodation had it not been for the hospitality of Mr. Forbes,¹⁴ a wealthy merchant of the place, who was so good as to invite us to his house which is a kind of Palace, where he lives like a Prince. This Gentleman informs me that in the year 1797 he was at my house in Woodford in Company with yourself & Mr. Wilkins, but I cannot recollect having ever seen him there. It is probable that he made the visit whilst I was absent from home, but having before I saw him heard that he should have [sic] said that he was acquainted with me, & appearing readily to recognize me on calling on me, I did not know

¹⁴John Forbes, son of James and Sarah (Gordon) Forbes of Scotland, was of the mercantile firm of Forbes, Panton & Leslie; the firm changed to John Forbes & Co. Cf. Colonial Mobile, by Hamilton, Ch. XXXV.

how to express doubt of our former acquaintance. This Gentleman is now the Principal of a Firm, which once went under the name of Panton,¹⁵ Lessley¹⁶ & Co., who for a long time having had the monopoly of the Indian trade in East & West Florida (it is said) have amassed a large fortune. Panton¹⁶ & Lessley,¹⁶ being both dead, the firm now bears the name of Forbes & Co., they have an Establishment at Mobile, Pensacola, & St. Augustine.

The Country between this place & Pensacola is all extremely sterile, being almost entirely covered with Pine, well calculated, however, for the Lumber business, & for tar Pitch & Turpentine. The Streams intersecting it are well calculated for Saw-Mills.—Both branches of the Perdido particularly, which are bold & never failing streams and but a short distance from the Sea. We lodged one night at Governor Folch's¹⁷ Saw-Mills, on our return from Pensacola, about 18 miles N. E. thereof on a branch of the Exambia (Escambia) & about a quarter of a mile distant from that River, down which the Plank & Scantling cut at said Mills are floated into the Bay of Pensacola, & although there are but two Saws, such is the amazing price of Plank & Scantling, that the Manager informed me that those Mills on some days yielded a net profit of 100 dollars.

In my last letter I gave you some acct. of the lands which I had passed through between the Tennessee River & St. Stephens on the Tombeckbee. I will now say a word in regard to the Country lying between Fort St. Stephens and this place. There are but two species of land from St. Stephens, I may say, to the Bay of Mobile, viz: the high lands, which are extremely poor, and covered with pine, & the low grounds on the Rivers, which are in general rich, the wet lands well calculated for Rice & the dry Cane-broken low grounds capable of producing large Crops of Corn & Cotton, & in the neighbourhood of the Town of Mobile, from the small experiments, which have been made, no doubt well adapted to the Culture of the Sugar-Cane. The poor high lands are covered with heavy pines & intersected with streams well calculated for Saw-Mills—& these lands have

¹⁵ and ¹⁶ William Panton and John Leslie were Scotchmen.

¹⁷At this time (1810) Governor Vicente Folch was stationed at Pensacola and ruled both the Floridas for the Spaniards. Cf. Phelps' "Louisiana", p. 248.

another advantage which the poor lands of the Eastern States have not. From the immense herds of Cattle, which are raised in these woods upon the herbage, which Nature affords & the Winter never destroys, they have an immense source of Manure. Most of the Herdsmen hold upwards of 1000 Head of Cattle, & some from 7 to 10,000 head, which never require a pint of salt, or a blade of Winter provender. I had nearly forgot to mention that the river Mobile from the Bay to some distance above the Confluence of the Tombuckbee & Alabama Rivers are filled with a continued chain of Islands for the most part extremely fertile, and some of which containing from ten to twenty thousand acres.

.....

Your friend & Hb^{le} Svt.,

P. S.

[Peyton Short.]

Dr. Frederick Ridgely,¹⁸
via New Orleans, Lexington, Kentucky.

¹⁸Dr. Frederick Ridgeley married a sister of Peyton Short. Ranck's Hist. of Lexington, p. 44, states that he was professor of medicine in Transylvania University. That he had been surgeon to a Virginia rifle corps in the Revolutionary army when nineteen years old, moved to Kentucky in 1780; was one of the founders of the medical college.

JAMES McBRIDE.

James McBride, son of James and Margaret (McRoberts) McBride of Franklin County, Pennsylvania, came into the western country in 1806, at the age of seventeen years, and the following letters, written four or five years after his arrival, furnish an interesting description of his *early* impressions regarding the general appearance and character of the newly settled country, and, of the primitive condition of pioneer life at that period. These letters form a part of the James McBride manuscripts in the possession of the Society.

In a previous Quarterly (Vol. IV, No. 1) is a brief sketch of his life, and a more extended biographical account by his daughter, Laura McBride Stembel, appears in McBride's "Pioneer Biography" published soon after his death in 1859.

L. B. H.

III.

JOURNEY TO LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY.

Dear Peggy:¹

Hamilton, July 22^d, 1810.

You have been good enough to encourage me to write to you, and (as you flatteringly express it) "communicate anything which I think might amuse you." This I consider one of the greatest privileges and comforts which I enjoy in this place, and feel disposed to engage in it and amuse myself in this way, in which, I fear you sometimes find me dull and tedious. As I at present feel a strong inclination to enjoy that pleasure I must indulge in it, although I have nothing better to entertain you with than an account of an excursion which I lately made into the State of Kentucky, from whence I have returned a few days since.

1810—Wednesday, June I left Hamilton, [Ohio] in the morning on horseback and rode to Cincinnati where I remained during the night.

Thursday, June Early in the morning I crossed the Ohio river and proceeded on my way to Lexington. Travelled twenty miles to Gaines' tavern where I breakfasted, although it was then late in the forenoon, after which I rode forward to Arnold's tavern where I arrived at 6 O'clock in the evening and took lodgings for the night. The road by which I travelled is called the Ridge-Road, so called on account of its being laid out on a ridge of high ground known by the name of the Dry ridge, on which, in travelling the direction I went, you do not meet with a drop of running water for a distance of forty-five miles. The road was very good which, in consequence of the highness of the ground and nature of the soil, I presume must generally be the case. Of the entertainment which I met with at the Inns on my way I cannot boast so much as of the road. The soil of the country is poor, and its appearance by nature none of the pleasanter, nor have the inhabitants greatly improved it by works of art. They are settled along the road at intervals of eight or ten miles from each other. They told me that there were no

¹Margaret Poe, daughter of James Poe, of Greencastle, Pa.; she married James Campbell. Cf. Letters of Jane McRoberts in the James McBride Mss.

²It was on Dryridge, Ky., that the writer's father, James McBride, was killed by the Indians in 1789.

settlements off from the road to the right or left for a long distance, consequently the nearest neighbour which some of them have is ten miles distant. They live by cultivating a small farm and furnishing entertainment to travellers—consisting of new whiskey and a liquid called tea or coffee, but which I was not able to determine—and for which they never fail to demand an adequate price. But I fancy you have heard enough of poor mountain ridges and miserable Inns, so I shall advance on my journey to the fertile country beyond, whither, if you please, I shall be proud if you will accompany me.

Friday. . . . Set out early in the morning and rode fifteen miles to Nelson's tavern at the south extremity of the Dry ridge, called the foot of the ridge where I breakfasted and continued my journey to Georgetown where I arrived at 3 O'clock, P. M. and sat down to an excellent dinner.

Georgetown is a pleasant place situated on the south side of the North fork of Elkhorn Creek & is the seat of justice for Scott County. It contains a frame Court house and I suppose about eighty houses, about twenty of which are brick and look very neat. As to the particulars of the place or manners of the inhabitants, I trust you will not insist on a particular account of either as I remained there only one hour in the heat of the day, and then proceeded to the residence of Coln. Logan,³ who lives on a farm in the country. Here I received a very pressing invitation to remain sometime with the family and partake of the hospitalities of the State. I accordingly tarried during the night.

Saturday. . . . I rode to the residence of Mr. James Vance,⁴ who lives in the neighbourhood, and delivered a letter to Mrs. Margaret Vance, which had been entrusted to my care. After spending part of the day at Mr. Vance's, I left after giving a promise that I would call on them again before I left the country. In the evening returned to Coln. Logan's.

Sunday. . . . This day went to church with Mr. Logan's family and heard the Reverend Adam Rankin⁵ preach. He belongs to

³Colonel John Logan, of Lincoln Co., State Treasurer from 1792 until his death, 1807. Cf. Collins' "Kentucky", Vol. II, pp. 244 and 684.

⁴Rev. James Vance, of the Presbyterian Church, came to Ky. from Va. in 1804. Cf. Collins' "Kentucky", Vol. I, p. 463.

⁵Rev. Adam Rankin, from Rockbridge, Va., settled in Lexington, 1784-5. He was the first Presbyterian minister who settled north of the Kentucky River. For full account of him and the Associate Reform Church see "Hist. of the Church in Kentucky", by R. H. Bishop, p. 140.

the Associate Reformed Church, and officiates in a log meeting-house close to the residence of Coln. Logan.

Monday. . . . This morning left Coln. Logan's and rode to Lexington where I put up at Postlewhaites, [Postlethwaites?] Tavern. In the afternoon I called upon John Maxwell⁶ who lives adjoining the town of Lexington on the North. On his pressing invitation I remained with him during the night. He is now a very old man, was one of the early pioneers of Kentucky, and has now no family living with him but his aged wife and a few domestic slaves.

I need hardly tell you that Lexington is a beautiful and flourishing in-land town. It has been, and yet is, the seat of wealth and refinement of the western country. The ground on which the town is situated is not altogether level but the gentle swells or eminences, rather add than detract from the beauty of the place. It contains about six hundred houses mostly brick, which appear to have neatness, elegance and convenience combined in their structure. The public buildings are: an elegant brick Court house. (Lexington is the County seat of Fayette County.) A brick College called Transylvania University in which are generally sixty or seventy students. A very elegant Presbyterian Church besides two other churches which would be called elegant compared with many I have seen. A Free-Mason lodge. A Market house, and a Theatre which is said to contain very splendid scenery, but I had not the satisfaction of seeing it as it was not then the season for performances.

There are a number of kinds of manufacturing carried on here; but principally the manufacture of hemp, which appears to be the staple commodity of the country. There are here nine or ten rope walks, and five Duck-factories for the manufacture of a coarse kind of hemp cloth. I was in one of the factories where were employed forty or fifty negro boys spinning in an apartment appropriated for that purpose; by means of a rope fixed in some manner, they turned their wheel, and drew out their threads, perhaps fifty yards in length before they stopped. Over these boys presided an overseer—a black man, with a whip in hand—to expedite their motions, and take notice of the

⁶John Maxwell, a Scotchman, and one of the original settlers of Lexington. Cf. Collins' "Kentucky", Vol. II, p. 180.

number of threads which each one drew. Others were employed in taking the yarn from the spinners and conveying it into an adjoining apartment where there were about twenty negro men engaged in weaving the yarn into a coarse kind of cloth, such as I have seen used for bailing cotton. But as this is not the most pleasant part of the town, the stay I made was short.

The people in this part of Kentucky generally have considerable taste and refinement; many of them well informed and quite literary characters. There certainly are considerable opportunities for improvement for those who are so disposed, as independent of their seminaries of learning, and book-stores, of which there are two very large ones in the town, they have a circulating library containing about two thousand volumes, established I think on a very advantageous plan (too tedious to insert here) where a person, at small expense, can have the perusal of almost any work he pleases without the expense of purchasing it, an expense which the fortunes of but few are adequate to purchase every book which he ought to read, or which he needs occasionally as a book of reference. To the support of this establishment, the inhabitants for twenty miles around contribute.

On entering Kentucky I had impressed on my mind the opinion that the people had a self important deportment, expressive of conscious superiority, but this measurably wore off on a more intimate acquaintance. I was received in the most cordial manner, and treated with every mark of friendship and esteem, by the families to whom I was introduced, and with equal respect by others to whom I introduced myself. As this is a slave country almost all the labor is performed by slaves. They are the only waiters, and very few of the white people, of gentility, can wait upon themselves in the smallest matter.

Tuesday. . . . The Court was in session, and I this day spent some time in the Court house hearing the Lawyers. There were present, Henry Clay,⁷ Joseph Davies,⁸ Jesse Bledsoe,⁹ Mr.

⁷In the U. S. Senate at this time, 1810.

⁸Colonel Joseph H. Davies, born in Va., 1774, was killed in the battle of Tippecanoe; an eminent lawyer, and in 1806 occurred his celebrated prosecution of Aaron Burr. Cf. Ranck's Hist. of Lexington, pp. 243-4.

⁹Jesse Bledsoe, advocate and jurist of Ky.; U. S. Sen., 1813-15; Prof. of Law in the University of Transylvania; Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Ky. Died in 1837. Cf. Ranck's Hist. of Lexington, p. 217.

Pope ¹⁰ and others whose names I did not learn. In the afternoon I was invited to accompany a party of gentlemen on an excursion of pleasure to Mr. Fowler's ¹¹ garden which is about a mile and an half from the town, which as I was not particularly engaged I accepted. The garden is situated, as I before remarked, about a mile and an half from the town, not on any public road, but apparently in a secluded situation, where only the keepers, and those who went purposely to visit the garden were to be seen. The mansion was a small neat frame building which appeared to have seen the lapse of many years. In front of the house is a beautiful plat of ground covered with short grass, having gravel walks, shaded by rows of lombardy poplar and various other kinds of trees, which rendered it extremely pleasant and agreeable at this hot season of the year. At the further end of one of these walks, at the declivity of a hill, issued a copious spring of transparent clear cool water. To this place, I understand, Mr. Fowler (who resides in the town) occasionally takes his friends to regale them with cool water, not forgetting an abundance of good wine and brandy, of which he is always supplied with an excellent assortment. From this we proceeded to the garden situated at the other end of the walk. Here the gate was opened to us by a black man, who with several negroes, are constantly employed in attending to, and cultivating the garden and waiting on visitors. This garden contains about three acres, all under the highest state of cultivation, every kind of fruit, flower, and vegetable which I have ever seen in a garden, were here in the greatest abundance. The ripe cherries, currants, raspberries, and other fruits hanging on the trees and bushes were delightful. I returned to the town with the company, not regretting that I had spent an hour or two for the pleasure of such a walk.

¹⁰John Pope, born in Virginia about 1770, settled in Lexington, Ky. He was in the State legislature; U. S. Sen., 1807-13; Governor of the Territory of Arkansas, 1829-35; Member of U. S. Cong., 1837-42. Died in 1845. Cf. Collins' Hist. of Kentucky, Vol. II, p. 752, and Drake's American Biog., p. 728.

¹¹Captain John Fowler was Rep. of U. S. Cong., 1797-1807, from Fayette Co., Ky., and Postmaster of Lexington for many years. He served in the Revolutionary War. Died in 1840. Cf. Ranck's Hist. of Lexington, p. 345.

Next day I called on Mr. Clay, Mr. Fowler, Mr. Pope, and Mr. Bledsoe, Secretary, with whom I had some business. But I need not trouble and weary out your patience by telling you how or what I am doing.

At present Farewell,
JAMES MCBRIDE.

IV.

VOYAGE DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

Mississippi River, April 1, 1812.

Dear Aunt:¹²

About the First of March last I received a letter from you, and omitted answering it until now, which was, not occasioned, or owing to negligence, but because I thought the intelligence I would have to give, if I wrote truly, would occasion you some little uneasiness, as at that time I was engaged in making preparations to make a voyage to New Orleans and am now so far on my way. Last winter I entered into a co-partnership with Joseph Hough, of Hamilton, [Ohio] with the intention of carrying on the business of merchandizing; we purchased a quantity of flour and whisky in the Miami Country and located two flat boats on the Miami river which we have brought out of that stream and are thus far on our voyage. When we go to New Orleans we shall sell our cargo, go round by sea to Philadelphia and purchase goods and return with them to Hamilton.

As you had no doubt heard very alarming accounts about the earthquake and other dangers of descending the Mississippi river, I suppose you would have looked upon me as going to certain destruction. Thank kind Providence, I think we have now passed those dangers, and if some untoward accident does not overtake us shall pass safely to New Orleans and if flour bears the price, which I understand it does, we shall make something very handsome. Our cargoes consist of seven hundred barrels of flour and some whisky and pork which we purchased in the Miami country on very reasonable terms, as the reports prevailing of the dangers to be encountered from the Indians and the Earth-

¹²Miss Mary McRoberts, sister of the mother of James McBride. In 1813 she married James Ralston, of Greencastle, Pa. Cf. McBride Mss.

quakes had so much frightened the people that none would venture to encounter them. These stories I considered improbable, but have since found too much reality to exist in them, particularly those relating to the Earthquakes.

I shall give you some little account of what I saw and experienced although it must be a very cursory account, as I was only on shore at certain points, and then but a short distance from the river. The following is extracted from the Journal which I kept.

Soon after entering the Mississippi river we began to discover the effects of the Earthquake¹³—the region of which we were now approaching. Above New Madrid [Missouri] on the west side of the river is a grove of Cotton wood and willow trees two or three miles long; these were all bent up stream and stripped of their leaves and branches in a singular manner. It is said that at the time of the violent shock the river at this place for some time ran up stream with great velocity, and from the appearance I have no doubt of the fact, as I know of nothing else that could have produced the appearance here exhibited—we were now experiencing considerable shocks every few hours.

We passed New Madrid [Missouri] in the afternoon, intending to land before night. Mr. Hough had command of one boat and myself of the other, we each steered our own boat and had only two other hands on each boat to row. Mr. Hough, who was rowing to shore to land on the west side of the river, discovering that the landing place would be a critical situation, by signs motioned me to keep out. I immediately turned my boat and rowed for the middle of the river again; I made every effort to land on the other shore but was unable; at dark I made a Willow-Island in the river and fastened to the willows, where we remained all night in a very exposed situation. The Island was all overflowed, but barely sufficient where we lay to float our boat which drew somewhat over three feet of water. The river was falling and myself and hands were obliged frequently during the night to jump overboard into the water, cold as it was, to push off the boat and prevent her getting fast

¹³For accounts of the New Madrid earthquake, see "Recollections of the last ten years in the valley of the Mississippi," pp. 222-228, by Timothy Flint; and, "Original contributions to the American Pioneer", pp. 34-5, by Dr. S. P. Hildreth, republished in Perkins' Annals of the West, p. 250.

aground. As soon as day dawned we put off from our dangerous harbor, in a dull rainy morning and at ten O'Clock landed at the Little Prairie about . . . miles below New Madrid. Here had been a small village of some twenty houses and a settlement extending back six or eight miles from the river, principally French & Spaniards. On landing we soon discovered that the place where we were moored had been part of the town, now the bed of the Mississippi river. A considerable portion, several acres, on which part of the town had stood, had sunk down with the buildings and the river flowed over the place. The place where we made fast our boat was a burying ground, part had sunk into the river, and coffins were exposed along the bank. The tenants had been Roman Catholics, as the cross was erected at the head of each grave. A large cross made of strong cyprus wood placed, no doubt, at the grave of some pious Christian, was broken and prostrated to the earth. Although it rained considerably, after securing our boat I wrapped myself in my great coat and went on shore to see what discoveries I could make. Of about a dozen houses and cabbins which I saw, not one was standing, all was either entirely prostrated or nearly overturned, and wrecked in a miserable manner; the surface of the ground cracked and fractured in every direction. At the back part of the village I found three Frenchmen who were sheltering themselves in a temporary booth of boards taken from some of the desolate houses. They informed me in broken English that the late beautiful village and settlement was now wholly destroyed. The inhabitants had fled with what property they could take with them. They, and only they, were left to tell the passing stranger of the melancholy fate of the place. I continued my excursion about two miles back from the river, although it was with considerable difficulty, and at every step witnessed some new phenomena of the desolating effects of the Earthquakes.

The surface of the ground was cracked in almost every direction and stood like yawning gulphs, so wide that I could scarcely leap over them, at other places I came to spaces of ground several poles in width, sunk down two or three feet below the common level of the ground. But what particularly attracted my attention were circular holes in the earth from five or six to thirty feet in diameter, the depth corresponding

with the diameter so as to be about half as deep as wide, and surrounded with a circle of sand two or three feet deep, and a black substance like stone coal but lighter, probably carbonized wood, I took some pieces of this to the boat, and putting them on the fire I found they would burn, at the same time producing a strong and disagreeable sulphurous smell. These holes I presume must have been produced by a strong current of air issuing from the bowels of the earth, throwing up sand and water and this black substance which was perhaps wood, long imbedded in the earth prostrating the trees and everything else where they happened and producing the most horrible disorder. I observed in several instances where small explosions had occurred under large trees, that the trunk of the tree was split up ten or twelve feet and separated two or three feet wide at the ground and thus remained standing. The day was dark and gloomy with [little?] light; I heard and felt from time to time the rumbling noise of these explosions; all nature around me had the most melancholy appearance. A sudden dread came over me all at once and I returned to the boat. I lay at Little Prairie until the afternoon of the next day during which time we experienced eight or ten shocks, some of them so severe as to shake from their places loose articles in the boat. Each shock continued about two minutes and was preceded by a rumbling noise like distant thunder or the discharge of a cannon at a great distance. We experienced slight shocks at intervals for the distance of one hundred miles above and below Little Prairie. The shores of the river in this region presented a most melancholy spectacle, the banks cracked and fractured, trees broken off and fractured, and in many places acres of ground sunk down so that the tops of the trees just appeared above the surface of the water. All nature appeared in ruins, and seemed to mourn in solitude over her melancholy fate.

In the afternoon of the next day, Mr Hough, with the other boat, made his appearance. The place where he had to land was in the head of an out-let so far down that he was unable to put out and gain the channel of the river again from that place, but the next day with great labor and the aid of some friendly Indians, who came along, they towed the boat some twenty or thirty rods up stream, from whence they were able to regain the channel.

I am now lying at shore on the bank of the Mississippi river, I suppose about one hundred miles above Natchez. Yesterday a violent storm compelled us to land here, it continued all night so violent as to require us to be up to prevent the waves from dashing our boats on shore. The high wind still continues to-day, and the river so rough that we cannot pursue our voyage. I therefore devote the day to writing you this letter intending to put it in the Post-Office when I arrive at Natchez. You may suppose that I am not in a very comfortable situation for writing, nor do I feel in a mood for writing after the fatigue I have undergone. I have brought a boat loaded with 350 barrels of flour from the Miami to this place with only two hands; labor, watching and anxiety have at times reduced me to almost exhaustion. Dear Aunt, your affectionate Nephew

James McBride.

[Miss Mary Roberts
Green Castle, Pa.]

PERIODICAL

USE

RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED

**MAIN LIBRARY
CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT**

THIS BOOK IS DUE BEFORE CLOSING TIME
ON LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW

85

LIBRARY USE

MAR 22 1974 43

REC'D CIRC DEPT

MAR 22 1974 12

AUTO. DISC.

MAY 12 1989

CIRCULATION

FEB 27 1989

APR 27 1989

MAY 30 1989

LD62A-30m-7,'73
(R227S10)9412-A-32

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

245199

Historical & ph
840 - 19 3-11

F-986

H6

6-7-6

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



C006J27397

